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Different routes of demographic changes in former Eastern  
bloc states at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century based on the examples  
of Poland and Ukraine

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Różne drogi przemian demograficznych w państwach byłego bloku komunistycznego  
na przełomie XX i XXI wieku na przykładzie Polski i Ukrainy

ABSTRACT

The article concerns the most important demographic processes that took place in two post-communist countries, Poland and Ukraine, after 1990. These countries differ in terms of economic changes that they have gone through so far. In case of Poland we may consider it as a success in reforming the economy, despite the fact that it caused certain negative social phenomena, e.g. large unemployment. On the other hand, in Ukraine, economic crisis was not stopped, but it is also deepening and its results have become significant modifiers of population processes.

The changes in population number, natural growth and migration in both countries are the subjects of detailed analyses. They were presented in the context of the “secondary demographic transition”, which Poland and Ukraine entered rapidly at the beginning of 1990, along with economic transformation and social changes.

**Key words:** post-communist states, system transformation, depopulation, natural loss, international migration

INTRODUCTION

The fall of communism triggered not only economic reforms, but also deep social changes in Central Europe and former USSR. After 1990 in most countries from this political bloc, especially those in Europe, the population growth slowed down or even depopulation appeared. This resulted from the decrease in birth rate. Internal migrations were limited, particularly those from rural areas to cities,

which were the major urbanization factor after World War II. Also international migrations, employment migrations particularly, intensified.

The above population processes were characterized by diversified intensity in post-communist countries. They were also distinguishing in the countries that developed after the collapse of the Soviet Union, where the transformation to new political system and market economy took a lot of effort from the societies.

The two countries that illustrate the differences, yet differ in terms of the results of the economic changes so far are Poland and Ukraine. In case of Poland we may consider it as a success in reforming the economy, despite the fact that it caused certain negative social phenomena, e.g. large unemployment. On the other hand, in Ukraine, economic crisis was not stopped, but it is also deepening and its results have become significant modifiers of population processes.

The article presents fundamental demographic changes that took place in 1990's and 2010's in the two countries: Poland and Ukraine. The changes in the number of people, birth rate, natural loss and migrations between 1990 and 2010 are the subject of analysis in the present article. They were presented in the context of factors related to political system transformation in the 1990's and in the light of the theory of "secondary demographic transition". The present situation of the population in Poland and Ukraine should be considered as a resultant of contemporary regional factors and long-lasting pan-European tendencies.

## THE CONDITIONING OF DEMOGRAPHIC PROCESSES

The population problems that have appeared in Poland and Ukraine since 1990's can be seen from two perspectives. The first one covers the phenomena and processes that are related to entering the so-called "second demographic transformation phase". It is manifested in clear tendencies to weaken the pace of demographic changes, primarily influenced by changes in marriages and fertility at only insignificant fluctuation in mortality and migration (Lesthaeghe 1983, 1991; Van de Kaa 1987). The theory of the second transition was usually associated with developed countries in Western and Northern Europe, however, in the 1990's it all changed. The population problems in Central European countries, which were undergoing transformation changes, have been seen in the light of this theory (Kotowska 1998; Kurkiewicz 1998; Rychtaříková 1999). The changes in social sphere were manifested in a similar manner to Western European countries with: different model of family, decrease in the number of marriages, fall of fertility and the increase of extra-marital births (Van de Kaa 1987, *Przemiany demograficzne w Polsce...*, 1999; Eberhardt 2007, 2011).

The premises of demographic processes in different parts of Europe were different. In the countries with well-shaped market economy, the transformations concerned primarily the system of values and attitudes which are characteristic of

modernized post-industrial societies (Kotowska 1998; *Przemiany demograficzne w Polsce...*, 1999). In case of countries that underwent transformations, including Poland and Ukraine, the changes in state-society relations concerned mainly abandoning tutelary functions of the authority and shifting financial responsibility for peoples' welfare from the state onto the people. In the situation of economic crisis it required the engagement and active attitude towards economy. At the same time the activities aimed at family development had to be abandoned (Kotowska 1998, Frątczak, Sobczak 2000, Eberhardt 2011).

Ukraine is one of the countries where political transformations took place in a form of "stage therapy" or "stair therapy" (Lazopoulos 1996). The country regained its political sovereignty in 1991, however due to its links to USSR economy, it did not manage to regain economic independence. The reforms and low level of professional engagement contributed to the increase of unemployment and the decline of living conditions. These phenomena are thought to be the main reason for the development of such pathologies as drug addiction, alcoholism, crimes, etc. Difficult economic conditions and poor health of the population, resulting from the level of pollution in most parts of Ukraine, decreased birth rate and increased mortality. Consequently, they led to lower rate of development and depopulation (Pyrožkov 1996, *Demografična kryza v Ukrajini...*, 2001; Semenjuk 2001).

On the other hand, Poland tried to regain its economic independence as early as in the 1980's by making economic and political alliances with Western Europe. Therefore, Polish society was much better prepared for market changes. Additionally, private farms were highly represented and the Catholic Church had large influence on the society. That is why, unlike in Ukraine, economic reforms were more successful, which was manifested in higher GDP *per capita*, which was 4,737 \$ in Poland and only 641 \$ in Ukraine in 2001. Nevertheless, stagnation was also noted in Poland, then the decrease of birth rate and negative migration balance have led to the decrease in the population number.

The reactions of the societies in both Ukraine and Poland to cultural, ethical and moral patterns of behaviour and their acceptance, were also important. This resulted from the openness to contacts and cooperation with the countries of Western Europe, where different model of social behaviours had been functioning for a number of years then. The model was primarily noticeable in the decreased scale of population reproduction (Eberhardt 2002).

Foreign migrations played an important role in both of the analyzed countries. The change of political system liquidated the obstacles in foreign travels that existed before, mostly on ideological background. Economic considerations became a primary motivation to foreign migrations. In case of Ukraine, unstable political situation in the country was an additional motivator for migrants.

Polish accession to the European Union and then to the Schengen area became modified by the size of migration, to a certain extent. These events intensi-

fied the already significant labour migration to West European countries. On the other hand, they built difficult to overcome barriers for Ukrainians and significantly limited the waves of foreign migrations.

### THE TRENDS OF CHANGES IN POPULATION NUMBER

Even at the beginning of the 1990's, both Poland and Ukraine had significant growths of population number that fluctuated around 200,000 people annually. Therefore, demographic forecasts for both countries predicted further increase in population growth (Eberhardt 2007). However, political transformations disturbed the predicted demographic development and the forecast trends assumed a reverse direction. The pace of changes in population density slowed down first, and then turned into the decrease in population number (Tab. 1). The decrease in population number was particularly rapid in Ukraine, where it had the features of durable depopulation.

Table 1. The population number in Poland<sup>1</sup> and Ukraine<sup>2</sup> in 1990–2010 (in thousands)

		1990	1992	1994	1996	1998	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010
Poland	Total	38073	38203	38265	38294	38277	38254	38218	38174	38126	38136	38200
	Urban areas	23546	23568	23672	23690	23682	23670	23571	23470	23369	23288	23264
	Rural areas	14527	14635	14593	14604	14595	14584	14647	14704	14757	14848	14936
Ukraine	Total	51838	52057	52114	51297	50371	49430	48457	47622	46930	46373	45963
	Urban areas	34869	35297	35401	34768	34048	33339	32574	32146	31878	31669	31525
	Rural areas	16969	16760	16713	16529	16323	16091	15883	15476	15052	14704	14438

<sup>1</sup> – at the end of the year, <sup>2</sup> – at the beginning of the year

Source: [www.stat.gov.pl](http://www.stat.gov.pl); [www.ukrstat.gov.ua](http://www.ukrstat.gov.ua)

The population number in Poland was increasing until 1997, although the yearly changes in population were smaller and equalled from several to tens of thousands people a year. From that moment a real fall in the number of people was recorded. It is estimated that until 2008, the decrease in population was nearly 180,000 people and the largest decrease was in 2006 – by 32,000 people. In 2008 there was an increase in population number. The trend has been kept for the last three years. At the end of 2010 there were 38.2 mln people in Poland – alike at the beginning of the transformation period. The growth rate of 0.1% was slightly higher than a year earlier.

Apart from general inhibition of demographic development of Poland political transformations brought the turn of former trends in population in both rural and urban areas. Up to 1990, the number of people in cities was increasing, while the population in rural areas remained at constant level. Along with political changes the development rate in cities fell and in certain centres even the number of people decreased. At the same time the population number in rural areas increased. Since 1991, the number of people in cities and its share in country population have been gradually decreasing. In 2010, urban population made only 61% of total population number and it fell by about 2%. Still, the number of population in rural areas has been systematically increasing, especially around major cities. Since the beginning of transformation, the number of people living in rural area has increased by over 400,000 people, i.e. 3%.

The decrease in population number took place in Ukraine much earlier than in Poland. Moreover, it was a new phenomenon that had not been observed before and did not have a precedent in any other slump in the number of people.

Even though during the first years after regaining independence the number of people was increasing, these changes were slower than in the 1980's and equalled to 100,000 people on average. The increase primarily concerned urban population that constituted almost 70% of the total population number. The population living in rural areas remained at relatively constant level of 17 mln people.

Depopulation in Ukraine started in 1994 and the scale of regression was high from the very beginning and made 300,000 people a year (0.6% of total population). The changes in population number concerned primarily cities and were twice higher than in rural areas. The population has been shrinking ever since, which resulted in the decrease in population number by 6 mln, i.e. 12% people until 2010. The depopulation trend concerns both urban and rural areas. It seems to have a permanent character.

## CHANGES IN NATURAL MOVEMENT

The main cause of population growth inhibition, and then its regression was the decrease in natural growth in both Poland and Ukraine (Tab. 2)

In Poland, unlike in Ukraine, the natural growth was positive until 1998, although a few times lower than in the 1980's. In 1999 the number of births and deaths were equal (Fig. 3) and the growth was at the level of 0‰. Yet, in further years it oscillated above this value. The period 2002–2005 was the time of the largest decreases in natural growth. It was then that the growth turned into natural loss. Another upward trend took place in 2006. Consequently, natural growth reached almost 1‰ in 2010.

Table 2. The indicators of natural growth in Poland and Ukraine in 1990–2010 (in ‰)

		1990	1992	1994	1996	1998	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010
Poland	Total	4.1	3.2	2.5	1.1	0.5	0.3	-0.1	-0.2	0.1	0.9	0.9
	Urban areas	2.9	1.8	1.5	0.3	-0.2	-0.4	-0.7	-0.5	-0.2	0.5	0.6
	Rural areas	6.1	5.3	4.1	2.4	1.7	1.4	0.7	0.3	0.6	1.5	1.4
Ukraine	Total	0.5	-1.9	-4.7	-6.0	-7.0	-7.6	-7.6	-5.0	-6.4	-5.3	-4.4
	Urban areas	2.5	-0.4	-3.5	-4.9	-5.0	-6.6	-6.3	-5.5	-4.9	-3.8	-3.3
	Rural areas	-3.4	-5.1	-7.2	-8.5	-8.2	-9.6	-10.1	-10.3	-9.5	-8.3	-6.7

Source: [www.stat.gov.pl](http://www.stat.gov.pl); [www.ukrstat.gov.ua](http://www.ukrstat.gov.ua)

Just as it was before the beginning of transformation, the differences in the size of natural growths between cities and rural areas are large. During the whole post-war period and also presently, the natural growth quotient is positive. In cities it has always been a few times lower than in rural areas and in 1998–2007 there was a decrease in urban population in large urban agglomeration, due to a sharp decline of natural growth. Recently, this unfavourable trend has reversed and both urban and rural areas contribute to the increase in the natural growth.

On the other hand, natural loss appeared in Ukraine just at the beginning of independence and economic transformations period and it systematically increased (Tab. 2). It reached its highest values at the turn of 21<sup>st</sup> century nearly 8%. Since then, it has been falling and in 2010 it was only – 4.4‰, i.e. almost as much as in the first years of transformation.

The problem of significant natural loss has been particularly noticeable in Ukrainian villages. The cities are in better situation, however, in both places the loss of people is clearly seen. In 2010, the loss quotient was 6.7%, which was twice as high as in other cities.

The decrease in natural growth in the 1990's in the presented countries was related to an instant fall in the number of births and in Ukraine, additionally, with the increase in mortality. The changes in the number of births, i.e. their gradual decrease might have been predictable and observable to a certain extent. They were ruled by the laws of population development of the societies, described in the theory of first demographic transition, whose phases were experienced in both Poland and Ukraine. However, the above-mentioned changes in birth and mortality rates had an unprecedented scale and triggered a new stage in the natural movement in both countries (Eberhardt 2007).

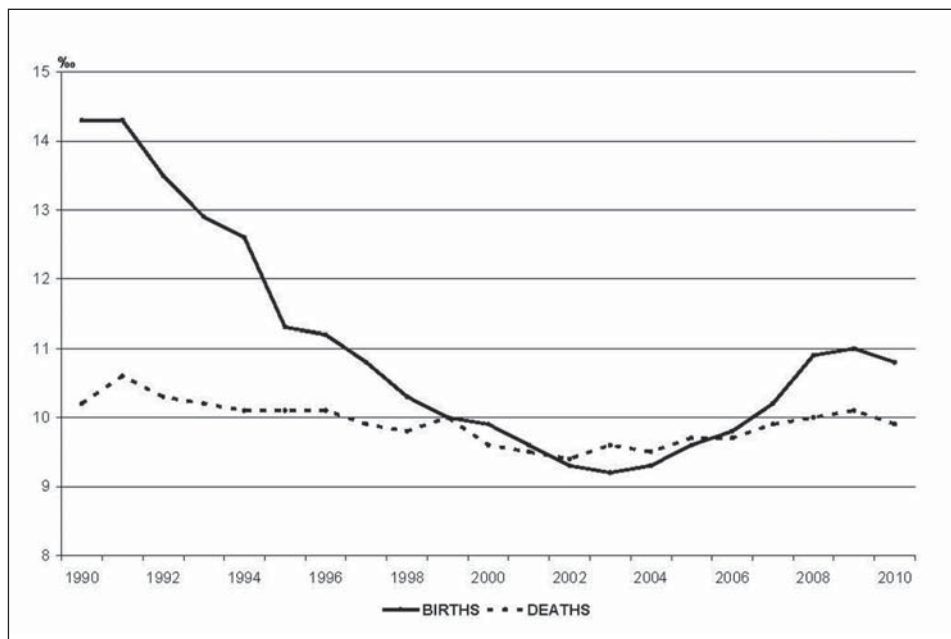


Fig. 1. The changes in birth and mortality rates in Poland in 1990–2010

Source: [www.stat.gov.pl](http://www.stat.gov.pl)

In 1990–2010, the number of births in Poland fell from 547.7 thousands to 413.3 thousands (10.8‰), while the lowest number was noted in 2003 – 351.1 tys. (9.2‰). Since 2005, the number of births has been rising (Fig. 1, however, it should not be considered as a baby boom, as the present number of births is 40% lower than in the 1980's ([www.stat.gov.pl](http://www.stat.gov.pl))).

The changes in the number of births in Poland during transformation and in the 2000's were influenced by a number of factors. The first one was a small number of marriages. Although the percentage of extramarital births has risen during the last two decades (from 6–7% at the beginning of the 1990's, up to about 20% recently), the majority of children are born into “the families constituted by legally bound marriages, in the first years of marriage” ([www.stat.gov.pl](http://www.stat.gov.pl)). Due to Poles' openness to the West and adopting western patterns and lifestyle, there are new trends in starting a family that manifest in smaller number of registered couples, later age of marriage and intensification of divorces.

Another factor is the decrease in women's fertility, which also corresponds to European trends. It was back in the 1980's when the total fertility rate in Poland was 2.3. However, it was falling until 2009 to reach the value 1.4 ([www.stat.gov.pl](http://www.stat.gov.pl)). At the same time, it did not guarantee simple generation renewal and caused limited reproduction.

On the other hand, the decrease in total fertility rate resulted from higher average age of women who gave birth to children from 26.8 in 1990 up to 27.3 in 2003, and then to 28.3 in 2009. This resulted in the swift of the highest fertility period from the group aged 20–24 to the group aged 25–29. Such a situation resulted from the changes in young peoples' mentality, who more and more frequently value career and economic stability the highest and postpone having a family and children for later time. This was especially evident for people who live in rural areas. Lower fertility was related to the economic transformations in the country, i.e. uncertain economic situation and difficulties in maintaining a family (Kurkiewicz, Stonawski, Węgrzyn 2004).

Increasing number of births in the last few years results from two factors. On the one hand, it is the echo of the baby boom from the mid-1980's related to entering the procreation age by women who were born then. Secondly, the increased birth rate results from the implementation of procreation plans by people in their 30's and above. Currently, the realization of such plans is related to finding a job, having economic stabilization and opportunities to provide the family with appropriate standard of living.

It is worth to notice the phenomenon in natural movements that took place after 1990, which was the decreasing number of deaths. In 1990–2010, it changed from 390,300 to 378,500, while the death rate fluctuated only insignificantly in the range between 9.4 and 10.6‰ (Fig. 2). This favourable situation might be explained by positive trends that appeared in Poland due to economic changes. They include the increase of average lifespan and decrease in infant mortality (Kurkiewicz, Stonawski, Węgrzyn 2004, Potrykowska 2007). In comparison with the early 1990's, the average life expectancy extended for men in Poland by 5 years up to 71.5 years, while for women by 4.6 years up to the age of 80.1. It should be noticed, however, that due to high mortality among men in productive age, the difference in life expectancy between men and women has been increasing recently (www.stat.gov.pl).

As a result of improving living conditions, the accessibility of medical services and the level of education, and the awareness of medical services among mothers in Poland the level of infant mortality has significantly decreased. In 1990, there were 20 deaths on average out of 1,000 births, while in 2009, there were as few as 7.2 deaths per 1,000 children (www.stat.gov.pl).

Undoubtedly, the changes in natural movement in Ukraine had much less favourable character. Firstly, the birth depression in Ukraine was much larger than in Poland. It was speeded up by the crisis in the state and severe deterioration of economic conditions of citizens, which did not facilitate reproduction processes (*Demograficzna kryza...*, 2001). In 2010, the number of births was 497.700 (10.8‰) and from 1900, when it was 657,200 (12.6‰), it fell by ca. 160,000. (comp. Fig. 2).



One should also notice that the lowest level of births was noted in 2001 and was 376,400 (7.7‰). Therefore, in 1990–2001, there was almost 50% decrease in birth rate, which ranked Ukraine as the last position in Europe in terms of birth rate level at the beginning of 2000's (Lithuania – 8.3‰, Bulgaria – 8.6‰, Belorussia – 9.2‰ in 2001) (*Rocznik Statystyczny RP...*, 2002). After such a dramatic decline of birth rate, after 2001 its gradual growth started, and brought the value of 10‰ in 2007, which was equal to the result from the beginning of the 1990's.

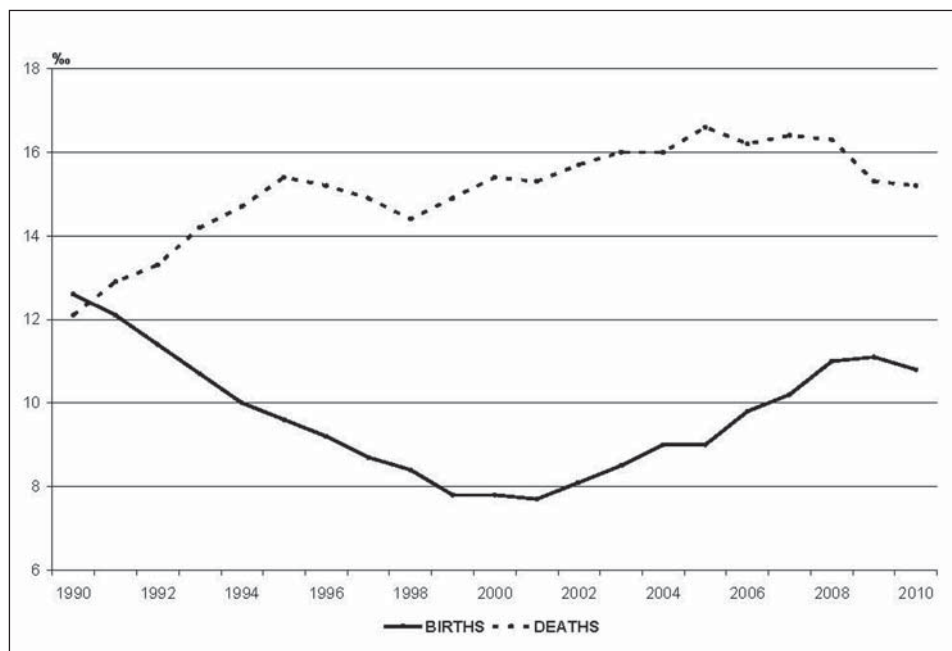


Fig. 2. The changes in birth rate and mortality in Ukraine in 1990–2010

Source: [www.ukrstat.gov.ua](http://www.ukrstat.gov.ua)

The major cause of the fall in the number of births was the decrease in fertility rate, which dropped below 2 children per couple in 2001 and then fell to 1.2 child in 2003–2004. The situation resulted from parents' conscious decisions about their children as they had to take very difficult financial situation into consideration. Frequently, one of the parents had to quit professional career after the child was born, which caused further decrease of already low family income. Therefore, in families with low or moderate income the decision to have children has been postponed in order to maintain the highest possible standard of life before having children (Zastavec'kyj 1993). The limitations concerning the number of children were also related to adopting western models of family with few or no children. The phenomena were characteristic of most post-communist countries (Eberhardt 2002).

Another factor that contributed to the decrease in birth rate was women's secondary infertility resulting from abortion, especially among women above 30 years of age. Abortion has always been a frequent phenomenon, yet it has become the most common way to regulate the number of children in families since the 1990's. The number of abortions was 1.5–2 times higher than the number of births each year (Pyrožkov 1996). According to the official statistics there were 900,000 abortions in 1993, which makes 100 abortions per 160 births. In 2001, the number of abortions was much lower (370,000), nevertheless the number of abortions was still equal to the number of births (Flaga, 2006). There were also fewer children born as a result of poor health state of mothers, that rooted from hard work, difficult and harmful working conditions on the positions that had been reserved for men, e.g. in chemical or construction industries. This became characteristic of the period of economic transformation (Pyrožkov 1996).

The situation concerning another element of the natural growth, i.e. the number of deaths, was equally bad (Fig. 2). As early as 1990, the number of deaths was as high as 629,600 (12.1‰). During the whole period 1993–2009, the number of deaths was above 700,000 a year and the peak value was registered in 1995 – 792,600 (15.4‰). Such figures ranked Ukraine among the countries with the highest number of deaths in Europe.

The increase in mortality in Ukraine resulted primarily from worsening economic conditions. The increased number of diseases and lower life expectancy along with relatively high percentage of elderly people (14% in 2001 and about 16% in 2010) led to higher mortality of people. If the average life expectancy was 66.5 years for men and 75.2 years for women in the second half of the 1980's (Flaga, 2006), the values fell at the beginning of the following decade to 66.5 and 75.2 respectively. The indicators slightly improved in the 2000's and reached the values of 65.3 years for men and 75.5 years for women ([www.ukrstat.gov.ua](http://www.ukrstat.gov.ua)).

Another cause of higher number of deaths was high mortality among men in productive age. It was primarily caused by cardiovascular and lung diseases, accidents and injuries (Pyrožkov 1996). Other important causes included pathological phenomena such as alcoholism, suicides, poisoning, etc. which became more common after the collapse of the Soviet Union (Eberhardt 2003). On the other hand, there was high mortality among infants and children under 10, which proved poor health state of the society as a whole. In 2001, there were about 15 deaths of infants per 1,000 live births, which was one of the highest values in Europe (Romania – 18.4‰, Russia – 14.6‰ and Bulgaria – 14.4‰) (*Rocznik Statystyczny RP...*, 2002).

## FOREIGN MIGRATIONS

Political and economic transformations in the 1990's had a significant impact on migrations in both of the characterized countries.

In Poland the number of permanent migrants decreased at that time, however, the migration balance still remained negative (Fig. 3). In the 1980's migration from Poland was definitely higher and resulted primarily from political situation. It is estimated that in 1980–1990, over 280,000 people left the country, while in the 1990's it was about 200,000 people. The migration rate increased again in the mid-2000's, after Poland joined the European Union and western job markets opened for Poles. The outflow of people was particularly high in 2006–2008 and covered as many as 100,000 people. Yet, since 2009, the number of migrants has been decreasing even twofold, which can be explained by the economic crisis in EU member states.

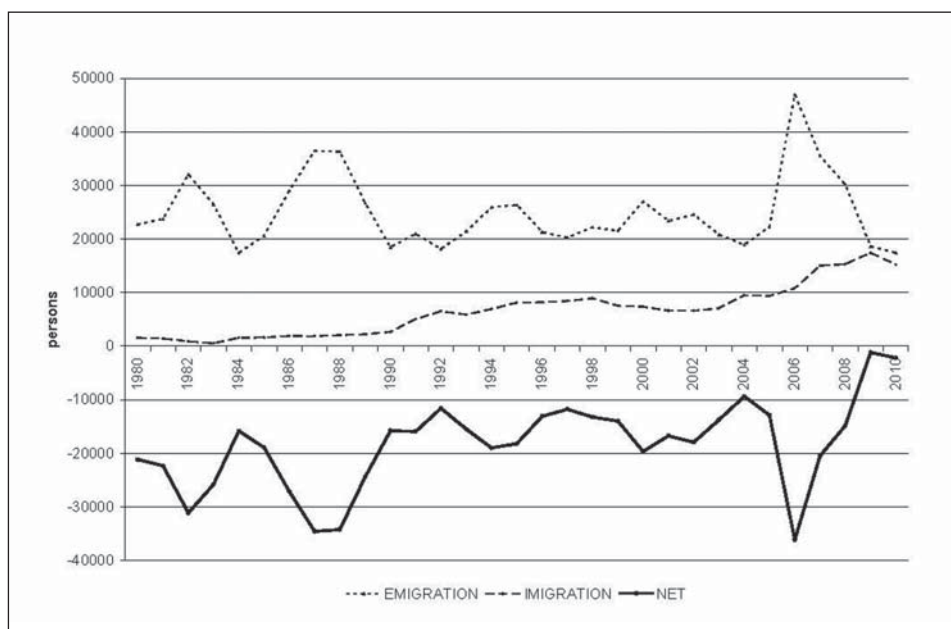


Fig. 3. Foreign migrations of Polish people in 1980–2010

Source: [www.stat.gov.pl](http://www.stat.gov.pl)

According to the data from the National Census of Population and Houses in 2002, the highest number of Poles was in Germany and USA at that time. The situation changed after 2004 when not only the number of migrants increased sharply, but also they started choosing EU countries as their destination. Therefore, in

2007 the highest number of temporary migrants was in Great Britain, Germany, Ireland and Italy (Matykowski, Dominik 2010).

As a result of positive economic changes in Poland after 1990 it became an immigration country for the people from poorer countries, such as Russia, Ukraine, Belorussia, Romania and Asian countries. They used to come here for temporal employment, however, many of them stayed and took illegal jobs. For certain number of migrants from the East, Poland was a transit country on their way to Western Europe. The high inflow of migrants to Poland started falling only at the beginning of the previous decade. On the other hand, the number of Polish migrants returning to Poland from Great Britain, Germany, Ireland, USA and Canada has started growing recently.

Despite temporary falls in migration intensity from Poland, the total balance of migration has been negative since World War II (Fig. 3). In comparison with previous periods, the negative balance of migration decreased during transformation period and in the 1990's. The total migration balance reached 148,000 people. Particularly rapid changes in migration balance took place in the second half of the 2000's when migration movements of Poles were strongly dependent on economic and labour market situation in Western European UE member states. The lowest migration balance for the previous 20 years that was 36,000 people in 2006, was followed by just a small migration loss of 1,200 people in 2009.

At the end of the 1980's and at the beginning of the 1990's Ukraine was still an immigration country with a positive migration balance that reached a few hundred people a year (Fig. 4).

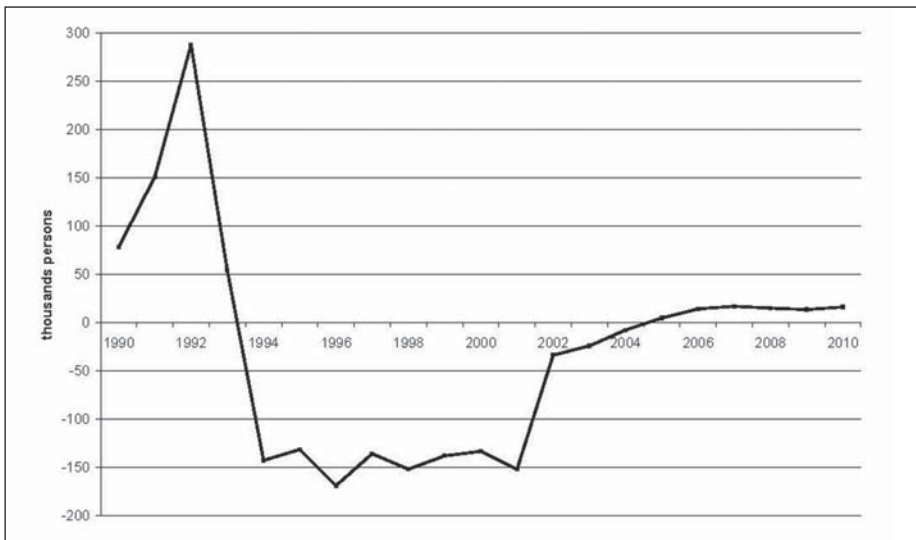


Fig. 4. Migration balance in Ukraine in 1980–2010

Source: [www.ukrstat.gov.ua](http://www.ukrstat.gov.ua)

Negative migration balance (143,000 people) was first noted in 1994 and was immediately marked in the total population balance in Ukraine, as it made 40% of the real population loss in that year. Similar migration balance of 130,000 people was kept in 2000. In 2002–2004, the population balance fell gradually down to 8,000 people. Since 2005 Ukraine has been having again a migratory increase in the population which fluctuates around a few thousand people a year.

Alike in the times of communism the main direction of migration movements are former Soviet Republics, referred to as “closely abroad”. In the first years of independence, the inflow of population from former USSR area took place. People with Ukrainian origin who had to live abroad for different reasons (military service, work, studying, etc.) returned to their mother land. Among them there were numerous groups of Crimean Tatars (about 250,000), Armenians, Bulgarians, Greeks and Germans (about 10,000 people in total) who had been deported to other parts of the Soviet Union during World War II and in the post-war period. Moreover, Ukraine became a destination country for a significant number of refugees from military conflicts in former Soviet republics. Soon after regaining independence Ukraine was in much worse economic situation than other post-Soviet republics (e.g. Latvia and Lithuania) because of lack of political stability and broadening economic crisis. This limited population inflow from other USSR republics and since 1994, negative balance of migration through the “close abroad” has been recorded (Flaga 2006).

Simultaneously, as a result of unstable political situation and broadening economic crisis, the migration from Ukraine started growing. The largest outflow of people from Ukraine took place in the mid-1990’s, i.e. a few years after the reforms were implemented. Russia, Israel, USA and Germany were the main destination countries for migrants. Russians from eastern, most russified part of Ukraine and from Crimea moved to Russia. Ukrainian Jews chose USA or Israel as their destination. A large group of Germans also decided to return to their mother land (Flaga 2006).

In 1991, the share of migration to former USSR was almost 90% of total foreign journeys. But from the mid 1990’s the number started falling to the benefit of the “far abroad”, i.e. non-Soviet countries, mainly Eastern Europe, USA and Canada. These countries have become traditional destination countries for Ukrainian labour migrants. The destinations for seasonal outings included Russia, Belorussia, Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia. Poland has played an important role in Ukrainians’ migrations as it has been a transition country on the way to Western Europe. The flow of migrants from Ukraine through Poland was significantly limited after Polish-Ukrainian border became the border of the European Union. It is particularly evident in the decreasing number of people who cross the border, and in the number of foreigners (Miszczuk, 2007).

## FINAL REMARKS

The article presents demographic changes that took place in the countries of Central Europe during the last 20 years at the turn of the centuries. It was a special period for this part of Europe because it not only brought new political situation in the region but also changed social and economic conditions. The period that was chosen for the research covered the years of political and economic transformations but also further years that can be considered as a stabilization period for socio-economic situation. The analysis of population indicators allowed to recognize and define a few general demographic trends which took place in the researched period, their interrelations and political transformations. It also helped recognize clear differences in the range of population processes in Poland and Ukraine.

In both countries the transformation in the 1990's caused a turn in the preceding demographic development that was manifested in the decrease of growth rate and then in depopulation. In both countries the phenomenon was surprising as in Central Europe these countries were the ones characterized with demographic progress until the 1990's. On the other hand, it is characteristic of post-Soviet countries, including Ukraine, that the slump in population development appears to be very serious, much more than in Poland. This may be associated with political features of post-communist countries. The states that were members of USSR were characterized by much more limited range of social freedoms and stronger totalitarianism, which was later "reacted to" by certain peoples' behaviours. One of the examples was a large migration of Ukrainians to Western Europe and North America, which resulted not only from the economic crisis, but also from the thrust to go to previously unavailable destinations in Europe and the rest of the world.

The new political conditions significantly modified the elements of natural movement of people in Poland, and the transformation process was marked by two stages. A constant decrease of new marriages and the number of children was characteristic of the 1990's and 2000's which resulted in the decrease of natural growth and consequently the natural loss. These changes pushed the country into another phase of population transformation, in which are most western well off countries. In Poland the process of modernization was shorter and faster than previously in Western European countries, as it was accelerated by political transformations and Poland's openness to the influences from Western Europe (Eberhardt 2011). Unfavourable demographic situation in Poland started improving from the mid-2000's. A gradual rise of the number of births and marriages was observed then, which contributed to the decrease of natural loss. Such positive phenomena can be considered as markers of the improving living conditions and social security for the population. Consequently, they may be the first signs of stabilization of demographic situation in Poland after negative changes in the 1990's.

On the other hand, demographic future in Ukraine seems less favourable. While Poland's population regress was stopped, in Ukraine it has been continuing. What is more, even optimistic demographic scenarios until 2025, prepared by both Ukrainian demographers and international organizations (UN) forecast further decrease of population number, down to the level of 42–45 mln people (Flaga 2006).

Alike in Poland, the situation in Ukraine is characterized by certain phenomena in natural movement of population, which are typical of the "second demographic transition", e.g. the fall in the number of marriages, fertility rate, birth rate, and consequently, the natural growth. However, the rapidity of these changes along with fast growth of mortality cannot be associated with undergoing the transition only. It should be stated that the classical course of demographic modernization was modified by the interference of specific factors, which are associated with deep political transformations in Ukraine.

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## STRESZCZENIE

Artykuł dotyczy najważniejszych procesów demograficznych, jakie miały miejsce po roku 1990 w dwóch państwach postkomunistycznych: w Polsce i na Ukrainie. Kraje te różnią się zasadniczo rezultatami dotychczasowych przemian ekonomicznych. W przypadku Polski można mówić o sukcesie w reformowaniu gospodarki, mimo, iż spowodowało ono pewne negatywne zjawiska społeczne. Natomiast na Ukrainie kryzys gospodarczy nie tylko nie został zahamowany, ale nadal się pogłębia, a jego skutki stały się istotnymi czynnikami modyfikującymi procesy ludnościowe.

Przedmiotem szczegółowych analiz są zmiany w liczbie mieszkańców, wielkości przyrostu naturalnego i migracji w obu państwach. Zostały one przedstawione w kontekście „drugiego przejścia demograficznego”, w fazę którego Polska i Ukraina weszły dość gwałtownie na początku lat 90., w związku z transformacją gospodarczą i przemianami społecznymi.

**Słowa kluczowe:** kraje postkomunistyczne, transformacja systemowa, depopulacja, ubytek naturalny, emigracja zagraniczna